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Volunteer tax preparers needed to help hard-working Virginians

Many low-income working families qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit

Richmond, Va. – They’ve seen every reaction from tears to sighs to squeals. People who volunteer to help hard-working, low-income individuals and families prepare their tax returns and determine their eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) say the volunteer experience is extremely fulfilling. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is now recruiting volunteer tax preparers throughout the Commonwealth.

“EITC is a tax credit for people who work hard, but don’t make much money. For many Virginians, EITC often eases their financial strains and can help them better provide for basic needs, such as child care, much-needed medical and dental work, or putting away a few dollars for an emergency,” said VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr. “By volunteering as a tax preparer, you are not only helping people learn of their eligibility, but you also are allowing them to save their hard-earned money by not having to pay for tax preparation services,” he added.

Just about anyone can volunteer. In addition to tax preparers, greeters, screeners and reviewers also are needed. Tax preparation sites will be set up throughout Virginia, so recruits are needed from all areas. “All you need are a few spare hours and the desire to help families in need,” said Peggy Friedenberg, VDSS’ EITC program manager.

Volunteer preparers often speak on how moving and rewarding the experience can be. “There are some very emotional and fulfilling moments. Many volunteers have had clients break into tears when learning they would be getting a refund through EITC. Often clients are down to just a few dollars. Many of the working poor simply cannot afford basic things many of us take for granted, because for them, rent and food must come first. When you volunteer as a tax preparer, you are helping change and improve the lives of hard-working people in your community,” said Carolyn Spohrer, a volunteer tax preparer and the EITC project manager for the Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP).

Volunteers will receive training in November and December in preparation for the beginning of tax season in January. For more information on the rewards of volunteering, contact [Peggy Friedenberg](#) at (804) 726-7371, or margaret.friedenberg@dss.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Social Services administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services, through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state and its home office in Richmond. The VDSS mission is “People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities.”

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Editor’s note: The attached podcast, accessible by selecting the “Pod” icon above the date at the top of the page, can be used in its entirety or for sound clips. Interviews are available upon request. For additional story ideas and information, contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.